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Georgia Southern, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College's new agreement fast-tracks degrees for students in public health programs, bolsters state health care workforce

July 12, 2021

A new agreement between Georgia Southern University and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC), located in Tifton, Georgia, will help students earn graduate degrees in public health and strengthen the state's health care workforce.

The agreement, signed in May, will allow ABAC students who earn a bachelor's in rural community development with a community health track, and meet all Georgia Southern criteria, to earn fast-track consideration for admission to the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) Master of Public Health (MPH) or Public Health Certificate programs.

"In the wake of the recent pandemic, it has become clear how vital trained public health professionals are, particularly those serving rural and underserved communities in Georgia," said JPHCOPH Dean Stuart Tedders, Ph.D. "ABAC's Rural Community Development B.S. Program students are uniquely qualified to fit this niche. Through fast-track consideration of qualified ABAC students into our MPH or graduate certificate programs we look forward to having them continue their education at Georgia Southern."

The partnership comes at a time of heightened interest in graduate-level public health programs around the country.

"Public health education has recently attracted greater interest, evident from the 20% increase nationwide in Master of Public Health applicants in fall 2020, making graduate admissions in public health more competitive," shared Gulzar Shah, Ph.D., chair of JPHCOPH's Department of Health Policy and Community Health. "Through this agreement, ABAC students will benefit from faster admission decisions and JPHCOPH will attract and train a greater proportion of the rural public health workforce that is more likely to stay and serve communities across Georgia."

Leaders from both institutions are optimistic that their unified efforts will positively impact students and Georgia's growing population.

"We are very excited about this new agreement, which will help open doors for ABAC students interested in pursuing graduate training and careers in public health," said ABAC School of Arts and Sciences Dean Matthew Anderson, Ph.D. "The public health programs at Georgia Southern are excellent, and we hope that by keeping ABAC students in Georgia for their graduate studies they will be more likely to stick around thereafter and utilize their skills for the benefit of our local communities."

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